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SUBJECT: VIEWS FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL: AREQUIPA IS HUMALA COUNTRY

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Sensitive but Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) In traditionally idiosyncratic, independent-minded Arequipa, business, media, and University leaders told Poloff, during a 3/16-19 visit, that Ultra-nationalist, "outsider," Union por el Peru (UPP) presidential candidate Ollanta Humala would decisively win in Arequipa Department as well as throughout southern Peru. They attributed this to an electorate that seeks a strong, authoritarian leader; has no confidence in current politicians; and identifies with Humala on a personal, not necessarily a political, level. A recurring theme was that leaders in Lima and national politicians were out of touch with the "real Peru" exemplified by perceived demographic trends in Arequipa of increased informality, underemployment, poverty, and discontent. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Poloff visited Arequipa 3/16-19 to assess electoral trends there. He met with Chamber of Commerce President Mauricio Chirinos, business leader Mauricio Chabaneix Belling, Vice Rector of San Agustin University (the third largest university in the country) Valdemar Medina Hoyos, Rector of San Pablo University Alonso Quintanilla Perez-Wicht, Chief Editor Enrique Zavala Concha of local daily "Arequipa al Dia," Director Ruben Collazos Romero of leading daily "Correo," and Regional President Daniel Vera Ballon. Poloff also discussed the election with numerous residents on the streets, and attended a rally headlined by APRA presidential candidate (and former President) Alan Garcia.

AREQUIPA EMBRACES HUMALA

13. (SBU) Those interviewed, with the exception of Regional President Vera Ballon (of the APRA party), were confident that Humala would win Arequipa by a significant margin. Rector Alonso Quintanilla and media editor Enrique Zavala said Humala's electoral dominance extended throughout

southern Peru, and that if the election were held only in southern Peru, Humala would likely win in a first round. Vice Rector Valdemar Medina stated that though Humala was firmly in the lead in Arequipa, in neighboring Cuzco where Medina had just attended a conference, support for Humala was even stronger. Some said voters in Arequipa simply referred to voting for "la ollita". (Note: This is a reference to Humala's UPP party symbol, a traditional bowl painted red with a white stripe. Voter identification with a party symbol is important come voting day given literacy issues and that Humala's brother, Ulises, is also on the ballot. End Note.) The local press reported that Humala would finish his campaign in Arequipa on 4/7 (subsequently confirmed by Humala's campaign officials). According to Zavala the electoral campaign was to close in Cusco, but now the Humalistas are opting for Arequipa due to the groundswell of support there, as well as the symbolic message of closing in what has historically been the country's second city.

¶4. (SBU) Most contacts agreed that the basis for Humala's strong support was an electorate that wants a firm authoritarian leader, identifies with Humala, sees him as a persecuted underdog, has no confidence in the current political class, and would cast a vote of frustration or vengeance against the establishment anyway. Poloff daily reviewed the local UPP headquarters, which was a constant buzz of activity. "Reservistas" (former Army recruits) in fatigue pants and black t-shirts milled around as did interested citizens, mostly men of diverse ages, reading propaganda posted on the walls. One poster was a press release from UPP congressional candidate for Arequipa, Alvaro Gonzalo Gutierrez, that advertised that he secured six full scholarships for poor Arequipenos (Arequipa residents) to study medicine in Cuba. Several contacts pointed out that

Ollanta and his brother Antauro have a history and standing base of support in Arequipa. They said the Humala brothers' 2000 uprising, which started in Moquegua, actually culminated in Arequipa Department, and that Antauro spent significant time in Arequipa before his 2005 violent uprising in Andahuaylas.

GARCIA PAYS A VISIT

¶5. (SBU) APRA presidential candidate Alan Garcia, on a campaign swing through southern Peru, arrived in Arequipa from Puno and held two rallies and a community lunch in the poor outskirts of Arequipa on 3/19. Poloff attended one of these rallies, which drew an estimated 2,500 supporters. It was unclear how many of these supporters were from the locality, as numerous empty busses were visible in the vicinity, apparently waiting for the rally to end to take many of the participants home. (COMMENT: That Garcia chose not/not to hold a rally in Arequipa's main square could be interpreted as an admission that he could not/not fill it, something which Humala has done. END COMMENT).

¶6. (SBU) The Regional President and the Mayor of Arequipa both belong to APRA, but they have long been at odds and the Mayor, Yamel Romero, has not hesitated to criticize Garcia. Those interviewed by Poloff opined that these officials do not help APRA's cause, as they are seen by the populace as incapable of cooperation and are surrounded by an aura of corruption and irresponsibility. Garcia's Second Vice President candidate Lourdes Mendoza del Solar is from Arequipa and her father owns a local TV station and the daily "Arequipa al Dia." (Note: Chief Editor Zavala works for both the daily and TV station. He said he was very conscious of the political slant and free advertising. However he was not an APRA supporter and tried to convey a balanced message. End Note.) Zavala and Collazos said that Mendoza is not well known in Arequipa though she was elected local Registrar. They added that she is not perceived as being qualified for national office and thus does not boost Garcia's campaign. Regional President Vera Ballon was the only source who insisted that APRA remains popular in Arequipa, claiming to

Poloff that Garcia and Humala were virtually tied in Arequipa.

¶17. (SBU) While APRA may have lost popularity, it nonetheless remains well organized in Arequipa. In what looks like a violation of the electoral laws, which prohibit the use of government property for campaign purposes, four APRA political operatives who joined the meeting between Poloff and Regional President all appeared to be operating from the latter's offices, even though they were working to advance the APRA campaign.

¶18. (SBU) Zavala told Poloff that there had been some suspect management changes at the Arequipa Decentralized Office of Electoral Processes (ODPE) and APRA was prepared to use this as a basis for challenging unfavorable electoral results. (Note: Local press reported that the head of the Arequipa ODPE was a registered member of the Socialist Party and was biased against employees. He was temporarily removed from the position, but then reinstated on 3/17. End Note.)

FLORES AND CHAVEZ IN AREQUIPA

¶19. (SBU) Despite comments by the Regional President and other contacts that Unidad Nacional (UN) alliance presidential candidate Lourdes Flores' campaign was "dead" in Arequipa, her local campaign headquarters was active with staff, volunteers, and interested citizens milling about (though in slightly less numbers than the UPP headquarters). Regional Campaign Secretary Irma Lopez Vera told Poloff that the local campaign was upbeat and that UN's regional polling showed that Flores had solid support in the region although admittedly still trailed Humala. Lopez lamented the scarce local UN party resources and the constant attacks on the party, complaining that APRA militants paint over UN signs on private property where UN had permission to promote Flores

and the alliance's other candidates.

¶10. (U) Flores' Second Vice President candidate, Luis Enrique Carpio Ascuna, is an Arequipeno, and, though generally well regarded as a former university rector, most interviewees said that he was not a politician and did not add much value to the UN campaign. The local press reported that Lourdes, like Humala, would visit Arequipa toward the end of the campaign in April.

¶11. (U) Fujimorista Alliance for the Future candidate Martha Chavez also was in Arequipa on 3/12, but according to Poloff's press contacts, she attracted little attention and small crowds.

A SPLIT CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

¶12. (U) Those interviewed predicted a politically fragmented Arequipa congressional delegation (it has five legislative seats). Most expected that at least one seat will go to each of the three leading alliances/parties (UN, APRA, UPP), with the two remaining seats going to two of the three. Other parties that these observers thought had an outside shot were Alliance for the Future's Daniel Postigo Cerpa, Justicia Nacional's Rafael Valencia Dongo (an incumbent legislator), and Fuerza Democratica's Marco Falconi.

AREQUIPA'S DEMOGRAPHICS FAVOR HUMALA

¶13. (SBU) Arequipa's demographics are changing due to a high rate of immigration from neighboring Puno. Various interviewees estimated that two-thirds of the current Arequipa population is first or second generation immigrants from other departments, principally Puno. The immigrants from Puno speak Quechua and bring their own customs with them.

According to business leaders interviewed, many successful Arequipenos have moved to Lima chasing commercial opportunities. The result is a ballooning population belonging to the poorest C-E sectors, and a relatively shrinking population drawn from the prosperous A-B sectors. According to local business leader Chabaneix, the market in Arequipa is increasingly informal and dominated by contraband goods from Bolivia. The business leaders told Poloff that this new population in Arequipa does not often see the benefits of trade and is the "real Peru". They added that though they personally supported Flores, she and other Lima politicians are out of touch with this reality. Chabanaeix emphasized that southern Peru is more connected culturally and economically to Bolivia than it is to Lima.

COMMENT

¶14. (SBU) Arequipa provides an excellent illustration as to why southern Peru is Humala country. Historically marginalized by Lima, residents are distrustful of the capital, hostile towards traditional politicians, and prepared to embrace an "outsider" who promises to shake up the status quo. These tendencies seem to be magnified by the regions demographic shifts, with most of the current populace still closely tied to Puno, one of Peru's poorest and most isolated regions, as well as a hotbed of leftist politics. APRA, which traditionally has not/not obtained much support in Arequipa, managed to win both the regional presidency and mayor's office in 2002. Infighting between these two officials, combined with allegations against them of misgovernance and corruption, appear to have discredited that party and undercut Alan Garcia's attempts to gain a significant share of the vote there. Flores, in turn, is perceived as being "out of touch" with the Arequipenos and their needs, presumably due to her being seen as a Limena and as the "candidate of the rich." END COMMENT.

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